

Shephard Released

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Summary: Gordon Freeman has escaped from the malevolent grasp of the GMan. There is only one man capable of retrieving him. That man is Adrian Shephard, the heroic soldier who has been AWOL for the past ten years.

1. Freed From the Void

The pallid man in the blue suit stood before him, smirking. The man straightened his tie, and continued to stare at him. He realized that he was in an Osprey, and was flying through complete blackness. He was unsure how long he had been in this place, but was just remembering how he had gotten here. After his battle with the hideously large Geneworm, he had passed out. Upon awakening, he found himself in the very same Osprey he was in now. The man before him had been with him, and had told him that he would have to be taken care of. The man had apparently taken a liking to him, and had negotiated for him to keep his life. He was placed in the blackness to stop him from telling everyone about what he had experienced in the Black Mesa Research Facility. He waited for the man to do something, as he found that he could not move.

"Corporal Adrian Shephard, it's good to... see you again," said the man, speaking in a very peculiar fashion, as he always did. Adrian frowned, disconcerted by the friendly manner in which the man was speaking to him.

"I am... glad, that I was able to keep you alive, as a... situation, has arisen, that requires your... services," he said to Adrian. His heart skipped a beat. Was he going to be set free? The smirk disappeared from the man's face.

"An... employee of mine has escaped. I require someone to... retrieve him, for me," he told Adrian. He swallowed. He had a feeling that he already knew who the 'employee' was.

"Gordon Freeman was... stolen from me, several days ago. I've never

trusted... those Vortigaunts," the man said. So it _was_ Gordon Freeman, the very same man he had been sent in to Black Mesa to kill.

"I would go myself, but... I am needed else... where..." the man mumbled. He turned towards the door of the cockpit, where a pulsating green mass of light was floating.

"Make your decision, Corporal Shephard," said the man. Adrian looked towards the light, which he instantly recognized as one of the portals that provided transportation between the worlds. He found that he could move again, and walked towards the portal. It emanated a warm, green light that seemed to pull at him. He turned back towards the other man.

"Who, or rather what, are you?" he asked him slowly. The smirk reappeared on the pallid man's face, and he slowly shook his head.

"I am... a man... just like you, Corporal Shephard," he replied, hesitating before calling himself a man. Adrian waited, but the man said no more. He turned back to the portal, and stepped into it. He was engulfed in a powerful green light, and he struggled to breath. Several seconds later, he blanked out.

When he awoke, he found himself standing on a bus traveling through a dark, unfamiliar urban landscape. There was one other person on the bus. The person was female, and looked to be in her late teen years. She had light brown hair that was tied in a large ponytail, and was wearing thin glasses. She looked sad, and stared at the ground solemnly. He surveyed her for a minute, before speaking.

"Excuse me, young lady," he said. She looked up, surprised, and frowned at him.

"I don't remember seeing you get on," she said slowly. Her surprise turned to fear as she looked him over. He looked down, and saw that he was still wearing his army fatigues and his Personal Combat Vest.

"You're one of the Combine, aren't you!?" she yelled, standing up and backing down the corridor towards the front of the bus. Adrian held up his right hand.

"What are the Combine?" he asked. The woman looked at him as though he was insane.

"Stay back! Don't you dare touch me!" she screamed.

"You don't understand! My name is Adrian Shephard, and I am a Corporal of the United States Military," he told her quickly. She stopped backing away, and looked at him enquiringly.

"That's impossible. The United States Military doesn't exist any more. They were completely obliterated during the Seven Hour War," she told him. Adrian gasped, and looked out the window. There were many people outside, but they were all being herded down the street by men wearing strange, gray gas masks and body armour.

"Those beasts in human form are the foot soldiers of the Combine,"

the woman said to Adrian. He faced her again.

"Tell me, what year is it?" he asked her.

"It's the year 2015," she replied. Adrian shook his head slowly, refusing to accept it.

"No, impossible..." he mumbled. The woman moved closer.

"What's wrong? Have you suffered memory loss, or something?" she asked seriously. He looked into her vibrant blue eyes.

"The last memory I have of being on Earth was ten years ago, back in Black Mesa," he mumbled. Her eyes widened.

"Black Mesa!? The research facility that all of this stemmed from?" she said, gesturing all around her. "But you look to be in your early twenties,"

"I'm twenty two years old. I was that old ten years ago, and I'm that old right now," he said, not sure if even he believed what he was saying. The woman sat down on the couch to Adrian's left. He sat next to her.

"Ten years ago, when I was nine, my father worked at Black Mesa as one of the head researchers. His name was Xerses Gerber. He was there when the resonance cascade occurred. I'm not sure if he's alive or dead," she told him. Adrian remained silent.

"How is it possible for you to have not aged at all over the past ten years? Maybe the same thing happened with my father?" she asked him quietly. He thought for a few seconds, then decided to tell her.

"Well, you see-" he began, but was cut short as the bus came to a screeching halt. A loud banging sound was followed by the abrupt opening of the door to Adrian's left. Several Combine soldiers entered the stationary vehicle, and trained their guns on Adrian and the woman.

"Kalyn Gerber, you are under arrest for conspiring with members of the Resistance. Either you come with us quietly, or we execute you right here," said one of the soldiers in a deep, inhuman voice. Kalyn stood up with a fearful look on her soft face, and presented her wrists to the soldiers, waiting to be handcuffed. Adrian stood up and stepped in front of her.

"You bastards have no right to treat people like this!" he exclaimed. The soldier at the front reached to his belt and unhooked what looked like a baton. He shook it violently, and immediately it became engulfed in an electrical energy. He took a step forward.

"Sir, wait. Look at what he's wearing," said one of the other soldiers behind him, voice sounding exactly like that of the front most soldier. The leader of the group surveyed Adrian for several seconds, and then pressed a button on his armband. A mechanical globe-like object crashed through the window to Adrian's right. He looked at it, and received a face full of white light, accompanied by a sound similar to a camera taking a photo. The leader of the group of Combine soldiers looked at a small screen on his armband. He

grunted.

"Who are you? Your data does not seem to be on our systems," he said.

"My name is Adrian Shephard. I'm not surprised that you don't have my data, considering I haven't been here for the last ten years," he said sarcastically. The leader of the group dropped his shock stick, and made a gasping sound.

"You are the Adrian Shephard!?" he asked, voice sounding slightly higher. Adrian was surprised to be referred to as the Adrian Shephard, and was momentarily put off. The soldier pressed another button on his armband, and then rose his wrist so that it was level with where his mouth would be.

"Sir, we have an individual here whose DNA has not been entered into our database. He claims to be Adrian Shephard," said the soldier quickly. Adrian dropped his gaze to the stationary shock stick. The soldier seemed to have forgotten about it.

"Yes sir," the soldier said after listening to his superior's reply. He reached to his belt and unfastened a combat knife. With surprising speed, he made a small cut near the center of Adrian's left arm. Adrian stepped back, moving closer to Kalyn. The soldier allowed the blood on the tip of the knife to drop onto a small screen on his armband. Adrian's blood soaked into the screen, and disappeared.

"The blood sample should arrive soon. I shall arrest this individual, and bring him in for questioning," the soldier told his superior. He pressed a button, and lowered his arm. He turned around, and spoke to the other soldiers. Adrian seized the opportunity, dropping down to grab the shock stick. He shook it, turning it on. He slammed it as hard as he could into the side of the group leader's head. A sickening crunch was followed by a thud as the leader fell to the ground. The remaining two soldiers reached for their own shock sticks, but were too slow. Adrian kicked the one on the left in the stomach, sending him backwards. He then pulled his right arm back, and stabbed the shock stick with immense force into the right hand soldier's left eye. The man screamed, and fell to the ground. Blood leaked from the hole Adrian had caused in his mask. He dropped the shock stick and picked up the leader's combat knife. The left hand soldier was struggling to get to his feet, but Adrian kicked him back down again. He stabbed the knife into the soldier's neck, killing him. He did the same to both the leader and the bleeding man. He straightened himself up. Not even an hour after being released and already he had killed three people. He turned to Kalyn, who was staring at him in bewilderment.

"Are you okay?" he asked, breathing heavily.

"I'm fine. It's just that I've only ever seen one other person fight with so much skill," she said, voice shaky with awe.

"Who was it?" he asked, curious.

"About half a year ago, in City 17, I met a man named Gordon Freeman. Of course, I knew that he had been working at Black Mesa for about a month before the resonance cascade, but I had never actually met him.

He was helping some fellow resistance members, and I got the chance to witness him fight. It was spectacular. You both display so much skill in battle. The two of you are very similar," she told him. Adrian gasped, remembering why he was here.

"Gordon Freeman, where is he right now!?" he asked viciously. She recoiled slightly at his new tone of voice. He did not want her to be afraid of him, so he calmed himself down and asked again, more politely.

"Please, can you tell me where Gordon Freeman is?" he asked her again.

"I don't know where he is. Like I said, I haven't seen him for about half a year," she replied. Adrian sighed. His mission was not allowed to be that easy.

"What do you think of Gordon Freeman, as a person?" he asked her calmly.

"He's a nice guy. He's done so much for the resistance," she said to Adrian. He narrowed his eyes, wondering if they were talking about the same Gordon Freeman.

"He's helping the resistance? But he's the one that caused all of this. He sabotaged that experiment with the Xenian crystal, didn't he?" he asked. She looked confused, and then made the connection. He was wearing military gear. He had come straight from Black Mesa. This meant that he was one of the soldiers sent in to 'clean up' the facility.

"You! You're one of the bastards responsible for the many civilian deaths that occurred at Black Mesa! For all I know, you could've killed my father!" she screamed at him.

"You don't understand! I was sent in to kill Gordon Freeman only! I was supposed to help any civilians I came across!" he exclaimed. Kalyn slowly moved backwards, eying one of the doors.

"Wait!" he yelled, but was too late. She had already exited the bus and was running away down the street. He cursed under his breath, and exited the bus. There was no one around. He suddenly began to feel trapped. He was in an unfamiliar place where he did not know anyone. To make matters worse, the Combine now had a way to track him down. He fingered the cut on his arm, which had stopped bleeding. He fastened the combat knife to his belt, and was about to head in the direction Kalyn had run when a door opened ahead of him. A Negro man in his late thirties stood in the door frame, beckoning to Adrian.

A/N:

Well, there you have it. The beginning of my first fan-fic. Please, read and review. I would be pleased to hear any criticism, so that I may improve upon future chapters.

2. Memories and Danger

"Over here! It'll be harder for them to track you indoors," the man

told him. Adrian nodded, and entered the building. A broken elevator lay before him, beside a set of sturdy looking stairs that led to the various stories of the building.

"Follow me," said the Negro man. He began to move up the stairs, and Adrian decided to obey him. The man reached the second floor and exited the stair case. He moved down the decaying hallway to the third door on the right, which he opened slowly. He entered the room, and Adrian followed him in. The room was as gloomy as the hallway, but was slightly cleaner. Adrian followed the man through the kitchen into a small lounge. The man gestured towards a couch resting against the wall, and Adrian sat on it. The couch was fairly hard, and quite uncomfortable.

"Would you like a drink?" asked the man. Adrian nodded again, and the man reentered the kitchen. Adrian looked around the room. There were no photographs on any of the walls, and no signs of plant life. His eyes slid towards the television, and quickly widened as he saw what was on the screen. The pallid man in the blue suit was staring at him from within the device. He smiled, and brushed dust off his left shoulder. Adrian stood up, and the image changed to that of a Combine member. He sat down again, still staring at the screen. The Negro man came back into the lounge, and handed Adrian a glass containing a thick, brown liquid.

"What is this stuff?" Adrian asked.

"Doesn't have a name. It tastes pretty bad, but it's better than the tap water. I swear that they put something in it," the Negro man replied. Adrian drank it quickly, trying to ignore the taste.

"You look familiar. What's your name?" asked the man. Adrian told him.

"I once knew a man by that name, but he died about ten years ago," said the man thoughtfully. Adrian was interested, and asked the man what his name was.

"Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself. My name's George Tower," replied the man. Adrian dropped his glass, which hit the ground and shattered. He stood up abruptly.

"George Tower?! Were you in the military?" Tower nodded.

"Were you sent to the Black Mesa Research Facility in New Mexico ten years ago?" Tower slowly stood up, a frown on his face.

"Adrian? That can't be you. You died in Black Mesa..." said Tower. Adrian gestured downwards.

"Look, I've still got my PCV and my fatigues! Tower, it's me!" Adrian yelled happily. A smile broke out on Tower's worn face, and he moved forward to embrace his lost friend. He stepped back, and looked him over.

"Didn't quite recognize you without your gas mask on! You haven't aged at all, man. What the hell's up with that?" asked Tower. Adrian explained to him about his ordeal with the Geneworm, his imprisonment, and his numerous encounters with the pallid man, including the television incident. By the end of his story, Tower was

staring at the television, as if expecting to see the pallid man looking back at him. He looked back at Adrian.

"If the world wasn't in such a chaotic state, I probably wouldn't believe what you just told me. But due to the state the world is in today, I'm ready to believe just about anything," he said to Adrian. Adrian glanced at the television, and then back at Tower.

"What do you make of that man? I know you've never seen him, but what impression do you get about him from what I've told you?" he asked Tower. Tower frowned at him.

"I have seen him. All the time back in boot camp, he would be there, watching. He only seemed to be around when you were in the area, though. I think he was watching you for quite a while before Black Mesa," explained Tower. Adrian thought for a moment, and then remembered how he came to be at Black Mesa with Tower.

"My training was accelerated. Drill Instructor Barnes told me that I had been bumped up on the list. Maybe it was the pallid man!" he exclaimed. Tower looked thoughtful.

"Why would he accelerate your training? All it meant was that you were at Black Mesa at the same time... as... Freeman..." finished Tower.

"Of course! As far as I know, Freeman and I were the only two to be placed in that void-like place. The pallid man told me I had to be 'taken care of' because I was a surviving witness. You survived, and I'm sure many other people did," he recounted.

"He wanted to preserve you, so that you would be able to help him in the future! He knew that all of this would happen, and yet he did nothing to stop it!" yelled Tower.

"Maybe he planned all of this! Maybe the world is in this state today because of him!" yelled Adrian. The two men stared at each other, minds brimming with theories about the pallid man. A sound from within the kitchen caused them both to fall into an alert stance they so frequently practiced back in the military. A grizzled man in his early forties stepped into the lounge, and looked from Tower to Adrian with an expression of puzzlement on his face. As he looked Adrian over, he grew fearful.

"Jaysus fucking Christ! It's the ghost of Adrian Shephard!" he screamed, diving behind the couch closest to the door. Tower laughed, and relaxed. Adrian remained alert, as he had no idea who the man was.

"What's the matter, Shephard? Don't recognize that old fool?" asked Tower, chuckling. The use of the words "old fool" instantly told Adrian who the man was.

"Scott Jackson? Is that really you?" asked Adrian.

"I'm sorry! Please don't kill me!" the hiding man screamed. Tower shook his head.

"You jackass! This ain't Adrian's ghost. It's Adrian!" he told the man, who slowly moved out from behind the couch. The man moved closer

to Adrian, scratching the back of his head.

"I dunno. I'm pretty sure Adrian died back in Black Mesa," said Jackson carelessly. Adrian rose his arm and back handed Jackson in the face.

"Do you think a ghost could do that?" asked Adrian sarcastically. Jackson straightened himself and smiled.

"You son of a bitch! I always knew that you were still alive!" yelled Jackson. Adrian explained his story to Jackson, telling him everything he had told Tower. By the end of Adrian's anecdote, Jackson was standing by the window, watching the street below.

"Combine're arresting some poor soul across the street," he said tonelessly. He watched as two Combine soldiers exited the building, carrying an unconscious man. They seemed to not care about the wrecked bus sitting stationary in the middle of the road. He turned to Adrian.

"What the fuck is up with that G-Man?" he asked him. Both Adrian and Tower frowned.

"G-Man? How the hell do you get that?" asked Tower. Jackson sat down on the one unoccupied couch.

"Sounds as though he works for the government. A Government-Man," he replied. Adrian thought about it, and agreed. Conspiracies were definitely the government's thing. Tower stood up and moved to the window.

"I think we should get Adrian somewhere safer," he said slowly. Jackson looked surprised.

"Why? It's not like they're after him, are they?" he asked gruffly.

"You missed the commotion earlier. Those bastards knew about Adrian even before he arrived in City 16," said Tower.

"Of course they did. They got everyone's DNA on some master computer," responded Jackson.

"Weren't you paying attention earlier? Adrian hasn't been here for about ten years. He left before the Combine invaded earth. They knew about him, even before extracting a DNA sample from him," said Tower. Jackson looked at Adrian, frowning.

"You're somethin' else, kid," he said simply. Tower turned away from the window.

"We've gotta get Adrian outta here. We have to do anything we can to ensure his survival," said Tower tonelessly. Jackson laughed heartily.

"Hell yeah! What've we got to live for anyways? Adrian could be the one to end all this oppression shit!" yelled Jackson. Adrian suddenly caught on to what they were suggesting.

"I can't allow the two of you to risk your lives by helping me!" he yelled. The two of them shook their heads in unison.

"Living in this Combine-ruled world sucks, Adrian. If I can do something to help end this oppression, I would gladly put my life on the line," Tower chuckled. Jackson nodded. Adrian was touched by his friends' loyalty.

"The Combine are entering this building!" yelled Tower, looking out the window again.

Ten minutes later, the three of them were climbing the stairs to the top story of the building.

"So what's the plan?" asked Adrian.

"We're gunna get onto the roof, and find a way down to the other side of this building," said Jackson. Adrian decided not to question this shallow plan. As he stepped onto the roof, he felt a gust of wind wash over his face. He heard a screeching sound, and looked over the side of the building towards the street below, where an armored vehicle was coming to a sharp halt. Several Combine soldiers jumped out from within the vehicle, and ran into the tenement building.

"Ho-ly shit, Adrian! You must be at the top of their most wanted listed, tied with the one and only Gordon Freeman!" said Jackson, voice filled with sarcasm at the mention of Gordon Freeman.

"Over here!" yelled Tower, beckoning to the two men. They ran to him, and saw a large ladder that stretched to the grass at the foot of the building.

"Looks like the only way down. Let's go," said Tower. Jackson mounted the ladder first, followed by Adrian, followed by Tower. Just as Tower's large hands disappeared from view, the door leading to the stairs flew open. Seven Combine soldiers moved onto the roof, looking around wildly.

"What the hell? The trackers say that Shephard is up here," said one of the soldier's in the partially mechanical voice shared by all Combine soldiers. Several of the men checked their armbands, making sure they were at the right co-ordinates. As they did so, the three men continued to climb down the ladder as quietly as possible. Adrian's heart was beating furiously against his chest, and he was beginning to sweat.

"Follow me," whispered Jackson, jumping off of the ladder. The three men ran across the abandoned playground, heading towards an alleyway directly across from the tenement building they had just left. Back up on the roof, one of the soldiers pointed to the playground and shouted a command. Four of the seven men mounted the ladder, intending to give chase, while the remaining three opened fire on the three criminals. Adrian and his friends moved from the playground into the alleyway, dodging assault rifle bullets.

"Which way?" asked Adrian. Jackson answered his question by turning left, and heading down another alleyway. The three men ran towards the open street, aware of the four soldiers that were attempting to follow them. Jackson stopped, and lifted the cover on a manhole.

"As far as I remember, there's a resistance base down here. We'll be safe there," he told the other men. The three men entered the sewer, and Tower pulled the manhole cover shut behind them. Several seconds later, the four Combine soldiers rounded the corner.

"Where have they gone now!?" yelled one, exasperated. Another pointed towards the manhole cover.

"There have been reports of a resistance base within the sewers. I believe that is where they're headed," he said. The soldier standing furthest from the manhole gasped. The other three turned to him.

"What is it?" asked the acting leader of the group. The soldier who had gasped raised his assault rifle and pumped the other three full of lead. They all collapsed to the ground, dead. The traitorous soldier raised his mask. He had a face that always looked as though he was tired, and short black hair that made him seem older than he was. He had not undergone the hideous mutation that was routine for Combine soldiers. The man's name was Barney Calhoun, and he was a spy for the resistance. He raised his arm and pushed several buttons on his armband.

"That's definitely where they're going," he said in a steady voice, watching a blinking red dot move down a thin passage. He walked over to the street, and looked down it both ways, as if expecting someone.

"Where the hell are you guys?" he asked no one in particular, referring to Gordon Freeman and Alyx Vance. Frowning, he lifted the manhole cover and entered the sewer.

A/N: Chapter 2 of my first fan-fic. Let's see where it goes from here. I'm hoping to add in some stuff to do with the G-Man's past, but I don't want it to sound too fake. It's kinda hard when you know next to nothing about the character, and I don't want fellow fans to get pissed off.

3. Broken Reunion

The three men had been traveling through the sewers for half an hour before deciding to take a rest. Adrian and Tower sat against the damp, cold wall, while Jackson kept watch.

"Ain't it funny? I'm the oldest out of us three, and yet I seem to have the most energy!" exclaimed Jackson. Adrian smiled. Jackson had never let his age get in the way of his energy.

"Running from an enemy that completely overpowers us. Just like old times," said Tower, remembering the Black Ops and their mission to kill anyone and everyone that wasn't one of them. Adrian allowed his mind to wander back to Black Mesa. He remembered the Osprey he was in being attacked by the Xen forces. He also remembered that there were three other people riding in it, apart from Adrian, Tower and Jackson. Two of those people were good friends of his.

"What ever happened to Wilkes and Chambers?" he asked the two other men. Jackson turned to him.

"Wilkes is working with the resistance full time. Chambers was murdered by some Combine scum while trying to help some citizens," he said remorsefully.

"You know what really angers me? The Combine here on earth are all humans who decided to join the master Combine race. We're fighting people that used to be like us. Still, that won't stop me from killing as many of them as possible," said Tower, frustrated. A loud sound down the passage to the right of the small inlet they were resting in caused the three of them to pull out whatever weapon they were carrying. Adrian held his combat knife, Tower held a lead pipe, and Jackson held a semi-working Combine shock stick. They listened intently, and heard a loud clanging sound, followed by a loud splash.

"Dammit to hell!" they heard a shout from down the passage. Jackson slowly stepped into the passage, and looked towards the source of the sound. A man was raising from the sewer water. He was wearing Combine armor. Jackson shouted an intelligible sentence, before running at the man, shock stick held high. The man looked at him in surprise, and quickly dodged Jackson's heavy attack.

"You jackass! Do I look as mutated as those damn soldiers!?" said the man, exasperated. The other two men ran to Jackson, who had fallen down into the water, and lifted him up. Tower turned to the man, and gasped.

"You're Barney Calhoun! You're a legend among the resistance!" he exclaimed. Barney look surprised.

"My reputation precedes me," he said happily. He rose his arm, and then looked at Adrian.

"So you're Adrian Shephard. Yep, I remember you," said Barney. Adrian frowned. He did not remember this man.

"Back in Black Mesa, just as Gordon was about to teleport to the Xen world, a door opened behind him. He took no notice of it, and ran into the portal. Standing in the door was you. You looked surprised, but you soon regained your cool. You upholstered a .357 Desert Eagle and fired two shots at Gordon. One missed, but the other hit him in his left leg. I was watching all of this through a security camera, and I got a close up on your face. At the time, you were wearing a gas mask, but I could make out some of your features. You definitely make me think of that particular soldier, so I am one hundred percent convinced it was you," Barney explained. Adrian looked bewildered, astounded that someone could remember the details of something that occurred ten years ago.

"That was me. But let me ask you this. What were you doing in Black Mesa?" asked Adrian.

"I used to work there. As a security guard," Barney replied. Adrian thought back to the moment in the teleportation chamber. He had run to the portal Freeman had entered, and was about to jump through it when a voice rang through his head.

"Don't try and... create a... temporal paradox, Mr. Sssshephard..." was the voice he had heard. He now knew it was the voice of the

G-Man. What the hell was a temporal paradox? Barney watched Adrian, who was deep in thought, and then began to continue down the sewer.

"Come with me, I can lead you to the resistance base," he said as he walked. The three other men looked at each other, and then decided to follow him. They trekked slowly through the sewers, making sure that they did not separate. Adrian was walking beside Barney, and was one of the first to step into a large sewer processing room. Something lunged at him from his right, and knocked him to the ground. A horrible moaning sound carried to his ears, and he almost fainted. He recognised that sound from Black Mesa. The hulking beast was humanoid, but had very distinctive differences. The hands of the creature were more like claws, and were a rough, red colour. The chest of the beast had burst open, revealing a mass of blood and organs. The sides of the opened chest had rows of fangs along them, and acted as a second mouth. A crab like creature served as the beast's head, and was the source of the hideous mutation. The beast unfurled its claws and prepared to eviscerate Adrian. Barney fired several bullets into the crab on the man's head, killing the creature immediately. Adrian looked at the dead body before throwing up into the water he was laying in.

"Sorry. We forgot to tell you. The Xen are still on earth," said Tower sympathetically. Adrian raised himself to his feet, remembering how many of these creatures he had encountered in Black Mesa.

"How are they are? Freeman went to their world to kill off their leader. I'm pretty sure he succeeded, as he's still alive. Shouldn't that have stemmed the flow of the aliens?" Adrian asked the other three.

"Killing the Nihilanth only made things worse. You see, the Nihilanth was attempting to hold the portals shut, as it feared an invasion by the Combine. When Gordon killed it, the portals all opened. The Xenian aliens were able to cross to our world freely, and the Combine now had a way of getting to our world," Barney explained. Adrian was confused. If the Combine and Xen were enemies, then why had the Combine on earth not killed off all of the Xen on earth? He voiced his thoughts.

"Well, the Head Crabs are the Combine's bitches. All of the other species are in hiding, 'cept the Vortigaunts," replied Jackson. Adrian pondered this as he continued to walk.

Half an hour later, they came across a large man sitting beside a sewer grating. He was carrying a Mossberg 500 Pump-Action Shotgun. He stood up quickly as he noticed them.

"Who the fuck are you? You're wearing Combine uniform! You scum!" the man shouted.

"Who are you calling scum? I'm Barney Calhoun!" said Barney. The man lowered his shotgun to get a better look. A smile broke out on his face as he recognized the man.

"Barney! It's good to see you again!" the man exclaimed. Barney looked puzzled.

"It's me, Derek!" the man yelled. Barney's expression changed to one

of wonderment.

"Derek Craig? I thought you were killed a couple of years back by the Combine!" Barney stated. The other man explained how he had escaped from the Combine and found his way to a local resistance base. The two men were reliving old times, and were wasting valuable time. Adrian cleared his throat loudly.

"Oh, sorry. Derek, is it alright if we stay here for a while?" Barney asked quickly.

"Sure thing. You can stay as long as you wish!" the other man exclaimed happily.

Matthew McCormack stared at the monitor in front of him, silently wishing that he would be blessed with some good luck. His troops had been unsuccessful in capturing Adrian Shephard, and Gordon Freeman seemed to have disappeared completely. His superiors were beginning to become angry with him. Sometimes he regretted his choice to become a member of the Combine. He then reminded himself that many people would have died if he hadn't handed himself over. But then again, how many people had died as a result of the orders he had issued? It was mind-boggling, and he decided to think no more about it. He heard a beeping sound, and refocused his attention on the monitor. It looked as though his luck was beginning to improve, as the blinking dot on the monitor that was Adrian Shephard showed him exactly where the underground resistance base was. He smiled, and raised his phone. He was going to completely obliterate the underground base, Adrian Shephard included.

Adrian was shown to his temporary room by someone who looked very familiar. He sat down on his makeshift bed, and surveyed the man, who looked at him, confused.

"You look so familiar. I can't remember who you remind me of, though," said the man. Adrian recognised the man's voice, and broke into a grin. The man looked even more confused at Adrian's sudden change of expression.

"Alastair Wilkes. Is that really you?" asked Adrian.

"How do you know who I a-" the man began, but stopped suddenly as he recognised what Adrian was wearing.

"Is that a Personal Combat Vest you're wearing?" asked Wilkes shakily. Adrian nodded, and Wilkes began to laugh nervously.

"Adrian Shephard? But that's impossible. You died in Black Mesa," Wilkes said. Adrian shook his head.

"No, but sometimes I think what happened to me was worse than death," Adrian sighed. Wilkes shook his head wildly.

"No way! It's impossible for you to be here! You're a fucking liar!" he shouted at Adrian, who looked very surprised. Wilkes turned and stormed out of the room.

"Dammit," Adrian cursed. It was painful to hear his old friend call him a "fucking liar". He lay down on his bed, and stared at the stone ceiling. This is the new world, people being forced to live in the

sewers, he thought sadly. Anger grew within him, until he felt like screaming. I'm not going to stop until the Combine are completely destroyed! Screw Freeman! He thought violently. He fell asleep soon after.

Wilkes marched into the 'living' room of the base and flung himself onto an old couch. He could not believe that the new member could sully his friend's memory in such a way.

"He can't be Adrian because I'm clearly older than him!" he shouted at the decrepit wooden table. He heard laughter from behind him. He quickly jumped out of his couch and spun around. Tower was standing in the doorway.

"What do you want, Tower?" he asked more violently than he intended. Tower moved past him and sat on the couch opposite his.

"Sit down. I think you need to know what happened to Adrian," said Tower slowly. Wilkes lowered himself back on to the couch, and suspiciously prepared to listen to what Tower had to say.

Jackson moved down the sewer pipe, covering his nose to block out the stench of rotting corpses. Tears were beginning to form in his eyes. He could not believe how ruthless the Combine were. He looked into several of the corridors that led to various makeshift bedrooms. A couple were kneeled over the body of a child Jackson assumed was their son. He almost vomited. He looked down the corridor opposite the one with the dead child, and noticed that a door was slightly open. A strange green light was coming from within. He moved towards it cautiously, pushing the door open with his right hand. He gasped as he realised he was looking directly at the G-Man.

"Please remind Corporal Shephard of his... _contract_ with me," he said simply. The eerie green light was coming from a portal just like the ones the Xen used to travel to Black Mesa. The G-Man turned, and stepped into it. As he disappeared, the portal closed. Jackson, mouth wide open, fell to his knees. This was his first close encounter with the man in the blue suit. He felt cold, and afraid at the same time. He rose to his feet, and ran out of the room to find Adrian.

Wilkes sat staring at Tower in awe. The story was so far-fetched, yet strangely believable. Maybe it's because of all the weird shit I saw back in Black Mesa, he thought quickly. Most of the story he believed fully. The one thing that made him apprehensive was the part about the G-Man. That went way beyond the boundaries of belief. He was about to question Tower further about it, when Jackson burst into the room. He ran directly to Tower.

"Where the hell is Adrian!?" he screamed madly. Tower shrank back, shocked by Jackson's sudden insanity.

"He's in his room, I presume," Tower replied cautiously.

"Where the hell is that!?" Jackson asked. Tower shook his head.

"Dammit!" Jackson yelled.

"I can show you where it is," said Wilkes from behind Jackson, who spun around, surprised. His expression changed slightly, and he

almost looked normal.

"Wilkes, is that you boy?! You've grown so much!" he exclaimed happily. Wilkes grunted.

"So can you take me to Adrian?" he asked Wilkes, who nodded. The two men exited the room, followed closely by Tower.

Adrian awoke to the sound of someone shouting. It sounded like Jackson. He sat up, rubbing his eyes. He had dreamt that he was standing on the very top of a huge building, shooting at members of the Combine. Beside him had been Gordon Freeman. He cleared his throat, and stood up. As he did so, the door to his room flew open, and three men came rushing in. Jackson, Tower, and Wilkes. Jackson grabbed Adrian by the shoulders.

"G-Man," he panted. Adrian widened his eyes.

"What about the G-Man?" he asked. Jackson continued to pant, before swallowing loudly.

"He was here! He told me to remind you about your mission!" Jackson shouted. Adrian felt a tug in the back of his mind. The G-Man was monitoring him at all times. He must have somehow heard him thinking the words "screw Freeman". He was about to speak when a loud crash sounded from down the corridor. All four men spun to face the door. They heard shooting. Tower slammed the door shut, and pressed his body against it. There was silence for a few seconds, followed by more shooting. The door handle began to turn, and someone tried to force it open. None of the four men were armed. Tower began to sweat, worried that he would not be able to hold the door shut.

"Open up! It's me!" came a voice from the other side. Tower's face darkened for several seconds as he struggled to place the voice. He moved away from the door. It flung open, and Barney rushed inside. He shut the door, and sat down on an old wooden chair.

"Those fuckin' Combine have found us, and I think I know how," he said, looking directly at Adrian. Adrian was puzzled, and suddenly remembered the Combine soldier taking some of his blood. He groaned.

"Shit! They can track me anywhere! This is my fault!" he shouted. Barney shook his head.

"You can't blame yourself for this. You had no way of stopping them from taking your blood. We've got to get you out of here," said Barney hurriedly. He stood up and walked swiftly towards the door. Just as his left hand touched the handle, the door flew open. He was knocked back. A combine soldier stepped into the room.

"Which of you is Adrian-" the soldier began, but stopped as his eyes fell upon Adrian. He turned and yelled something down the corridor. He faced Adrian again.

"You are coming with me," he shouted in his disrupted voice. Tower, who was standing to the left of the soldier, took a dive forward. He crashed into him, and they both fell to the ground. Jackson rushed forward and kicked the soldier in the head, knocking him out. He reached down and pried an assault rifle from the unconscious

soldier's hands.

"This will do nicely," he chuckled. Lead by Jackson, the men exited the room and ran down the corridor. Several soldiers ran out from the side passages, but Jackson gunned them down with relative ease.

"Can still remember all my training pretty damn well," he remarked, smiling. The group continued to run, stopping to help injured members of the resistance, carrying as many as they could.

A/N: The third chapter, after one hell of a long time. I lost my computer for 3 months due to a power surge, so I couldn't do any work at all on my story.

End
file.